

HIGH PERFORMANCE FOR A BETTER WORLD

The Performance Imperative for Faith-Based Organizations

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Developed collaboratively by the
**LEAP OF REASON
AMBASSADORS COMMUNITY**



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THE
PERFORMANCE
IMPERATIVE

The Performance Imperative for Faith-Based Organizations

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What would it take to look in the mirror and know that your house of worship, ministry, or agency is making a meaningful, enduring difference?

In this era of scarcity and seismic change, questions over how best to serve God and fulfill your mission carry increasing weight.

Faith-based institutions have always been good at keeping count—whether it’s assistance delivered, children and families reached through a program or service, or voices raised. But “how many” only measures what we see on the surface.

The most effective faith-based institutions go deeper.

No matter your mission—whether it’s nurturing spiritual growth, instilling faith-based values, or creating a more just and equitable society—you need a way of knowing that you’re reaching your God-given potential to serve and equipping your staff and volunteers to do the same.

WHAT IS ‘THE PERFORMANCE IMPERATIVE’ AND WHO DEVELOPED IT?

“**The Performance Imperative**” is a framework to help organizations perform at a level worthy of their calling and the people they serve.

Developed by dozens of **leaders** from many parts of the nonprofit ecosystem, the Performance Imperative defines “high performance” by tying how an organization operates to why:

High performance is the ability to deliver—over a prolonged period of time—meaningful, measurable, and financially sustainable results for the people or causes the organization is in existence to serve.

The Performance Imperative also lays out in detail the seven organizational pillars that can help you progress the most on your journey toward delivering meaningful, measurable results for the people or causes you exist to serve. These are the seven habits of highly effective organizations:

- **Pillar 1:** Courageous, adaptive executive and board leadership
- **Pillar 2:** Disciplined, people-focused management
- **Pillar 3:** Well-designed and well-implemented programs and strategies
- **Pillar 4:** Financial health and sustainability
- **Pillar 5:** A culture that values learning
- **Pillar 6:** Internal monitoring for continuous improvement
- **Pillar 7:** External evaluation for mission effectiveness



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WHY THE PERFORMANCE IMPERATIVE FOR FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS?

In the private sector, profit is a strong motivator. In faith-based organizations, the motivation tends to be much more intrinsic. Leaders and staff often speak of being called to their work.

What if that calling turned out to be the most powerful motivator of all?

And what if the faith community's unique position and role in our communities proved to be an ideal launching point for such a difficult but rewarding journey? Faith-based organizations are:

- On the frontlines of most pressing challenges we face in our society
- In it for the long haul (serving God has never been a temporal task)
- Able to connect at the deepest levels with the people we serve.

That's why we developed The Performance Imperative for Faith-Based Organizations..

HOW TO USE THE PERFORMANCE IMPERATIVE

- **Governing Bodies:** Share copies with other members of your governing body to initiate honest, focused conversations about how to serve God and fulfill your mission in an era of complexity and rapid change.
- **Leaders:** Overlay your mission, vision, and/or core principles to the Performance Imperative to see how aligned you may already be or where there are gaps. Allow it to help you discern how you can better support your staff and what new skill sets you may need to add to your team.
- **Faith-based Funders:** Spark introspection about how to better support your grantees' efforts, and, where appropriate, incorporate the definition and pillars in grantmaking language, processes, assessment, and support.
- **Professors of Seminary Leadership Programs:** Build the Performance Imperative into the syllabus and structure of relevant courses to instill an understanding of high performance and its importance in program and service delivery.



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WHAT TO EXPECT FROM USING THE PERFORMANCE IMPERATIVE

- A serious gut check for you and your staff
- Ways to discover whether a program should continue or stop—regardless of its popularity
- Specific ideas to improve your staff culture
- A new outlook on short-term budgeting vs. long-term financial stewardship
- Meaningful, measurable change in the lives of the people you serve

GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

To help you get started, we've developed a quick glossary, specifically for faith-based organizations, to translate some of the terms used in the Performance Imperative:

Outputs: What you count, such as supplies delivered, volunteer hours, petitions signed, and other activities and services carried out.

Outcomes: What you wish to achieve for your target population/the people you serve, generally defined in terms of expected changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, behavior, or condition (e.g., reduced poverty, improved public policies).

Theory of Change: Your organization's shared assumptions about the processes and staff capacities necessary to produce the sequence of incremental changes your target population/ the people you serve (e.g., the homeless, the poor) experience as they progress toward short- and long-term outcomes.

External evaluation: Surveys or studies (no one type is right for every organization) that are capable of factoring out other explanations for how these results came to be.

We hope you use your influence to help start the honest conversations this journey will require.

We look forward to your feedback and stories from your journey.